A Qualitative Analysis of the Viability of Digital Marketing Strategies in Conveying Brand Information to Clients in the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Sector in Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This study was conducted to qualitatively analyses the viability of digital marketing strategies (DMS) in conveying brand information to clients within the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector in Harare, Zimbabwe. Viability of digital marketing strategies in this case refers to the ability of DMS to convey brand information to clients and to enhance brand visibility of pharmaceutical manufacturing sector's products. The study widens the understanding on the processes of the dynamics of technological change, and transition within the business world with a focus on the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry in Zimbabwe. Basing its theoretical underpinnings on the Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), the study addressed three research objectives. Twenty-one managers of seven pharmaceutical manufacturing companies in Harare, Zimbabwe were purposively selected using non-probability judgmental sampling techniques. A Key Informant Interview (KII) guide was used to gather primary data which was then analyzed using NVIVO analysis. The study identified various digital marketing strategies in use, which includes whatsapp, facebook, twitter, linkedIn, Instagram, email, website and zoom meetings. The results demonstrated that DMS are viable in conveying brand information as they enable content sharing and time and cost-efficient brand information dissemination, globally. DMS allow pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to effectively communicate and showcase their products to their clients irrespective of geographical boundaries and in various forms which can be text messages, images, audio and audio visuals. DMS creates a network connection which simplifies brand awareness promotions, global markets reach cost-effectively and efficiently, open up in global markets and gain new clients, updating brand information timeously, thereby retaining and expanding customer base. Hence, business organizations gain competitive advantage and withstand stiff

competition against the international giants. Poor internet and connectivity, power challenges, remoteness, high acquisition and maintenance costs and the presence of conservative minds were the challenges in DMS implementation to convey brand information. The study recommends the pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to leverage on DMS in conveying brand information in order to enhance brand visibility, thereby improving business performance. The study further recommends the government, through the Medical Control Authority of Zimbabwe (MCAZ) to monitor the information that is shared on various digital marketing platforms and the government itself to create an enabling environment for the use of digital marketing strategies by boosting internet connectivity countrywide. The greatest challenge that this study faced had to do with methodological limitations, as the study was not able to engage the clients and other employees. To resolve this limitation, further investigation was directed on the key informants since strategic issues remain issues of management.

Keywords: Digital Marketing Strategies, Brand Information, Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Sector, Viability, Zimbabwe

Introduction

Digital marketing is a marketing strategy needed by business organisations to stay competitive in this current business environment (Nur et al., 2024). In fact, a business firm requires marketing personnel with knowledge based on modern business marketing techniques including their application especially those related to online marketing, (Chaffey and Chadwick, 2016). Among the many factors that have accelerated the use and adoption of digital marketing is the twenty-first century technological advancements (Khaled et al., 2019) and the 2019 epidemic better known as Covid-19; which has broken the medical supply chains, forcing pharmaceutical players and their consumers to rely more on local supplies.

At the local level, the lockdown of entire villages, suburbs, towns and cities has thus forced consumers, and suppliers of pharmaceutical drugs to rely on digital marketing platforms in their efforts to search for desired drugs and new markets respectively, (Mordor Intelligence Reviews, 2022). Fortunately, a significant number of people are now using the internet on a global scale. In Indonesia, it has been observed that 196.71 million out of a total of 266.91 million people are already engaged in internet use and this surge in the number of people engaged in the Internet of Things has been spurred by the outbreak of such pandemics like Covid-19, (Putri 2021, p.87).

It has further been observed that spending on digital advertising and marketing in countries like Indonesia phenomenally increased by 15.15% in 2020 when compared to the previous year, (Digital, 2023). In South Africa, it has been recognised that about 43.48 million people are using the internet with a 72.3% internet penetration (Digital, 2023), while in Zimbabwe the number of people using the internet has been pegged at 5.74 million people out of a total of 16.49 million people (Digital, 2023).

In view of the above, digital marketing has been found to allow firms to conscientise the public of their brands within a short-space of time at an affordable cost, (Mandal et al., 2016). On the side of the clients, digital marketing provides convenient time for drug search on the side of consumers in the comfort of own home anytime (Gayathiri and Ravindran, 2020). Notwithstanding, the purpose of this article is to examine in greater depth, the viability of digital marketing strategies in conveying brand information to their respective consumers

within Zimbabwe's manufacturing pharmaceutical sector. Though a number of studies on digital marketing within the pharmaceutical sector have been carried out [for example, Zanamwe et al., (2012)], a qualitative study on the viability of digital marketing in conveying brand information to their respective consumers has not been adequately carried out. While other scholars, Zanamwe et al., (2012) indicated that the Zimbabwean pharmaceutical organizations have adopted several digital marketing technologies including company websites, the viability of digital marketing strategies in conscientising the public on pharmaceutical brands has not been explored adequately within the context of the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector; making this contribution absolutely unique.

Thus, focusing on the viability of digital marketing with particular emphasis on the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry in Zimbabwe, the study problematises digital marketing in general and contributes to new thinking around the role of modern forms of technological advancements within the business world. In doing this, the study contributes to a broad understanding of the processes of the dynamics of technological change, and transition within the business world, with a focus on Zimbabwe's pharmaceutical manufacturing industry, twenty-three years after the turn of the millennium.

This study is chronologically organised. The next section outlines the research problem of this study. What follows are the limitations and a review of related literature. This is followed by an outline of research questions and objectives, research methodology including data analysis plan and data analysis. From there, the study presents the findings and conclusion of the study. In the final section, the study gives recommendations and acknowledgement.

Problem Statement

Zimbabwe's pharmaceutical manufacturing sector is evidence by low market share owing to lack of competitiveness as their brands are less visible. Tangible evidence of this problem has been expressed by quite a number of authorities, including the Mordor Intelligence Review (2020) which observed that the Zimbabwean pharmaceutical manufacturing sector has been experiencing shrinking growth due to significant drop in market share of locally produced medicines by 10% from 2014 to the current. Munyoro and Madzinga-Kusena (2024) and Musiza (2023) similarly demonstrated that the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector business in Zimbabwe is experiencing stiff international competition, particularly from the Indian pharmaceutical manufacturers, who are the pharmaceutical giants and their brands are well known and acceptable internationally. Limited competitiveness has also been expressed by tariff structures that have favoured the importation of foreign drugs (UNIDO, 2017). UNIDO (2017) established that the Zimbabwean pharmaceutical industry is largely disconnected from the markets, and could only export an average value of US$1.4 million out of a US$4.7 billion SADC market share between 2014 and 2017, (Calder, 2019). Though, the Zimbabwean Ministry of Health and Child-Care (MOHCC) has taken drastic measures to promote the local Pharmaceutical industry (i.e.Avail, Natpharma, CAPS and Varichem) by funding the production of medicinal drugs (Mordor Intelligence Reviews, 2020), it seems no effort has been done to support the promotion of the products brands for market awareness and visibility.

Resultantly, the majority of Zimbabwe's pharmaceutical products continued to be imported. Thus, US$124 million worth of pharmaceuticals were imported in 2014 (Okereke, Mashavakure and Abdulwasiu 2022), of which some of the products were locally

manufactured. In addition, local manufacturers were only exported medicinal drugs valued at US$1.4 million, which is very small percentage owing to the invisibility of their brands. Theoretically, a thorough review of literature demonstrated a research gap in the area of pharmaceutical brands marketing and conveyance of brand information particularly on the viability of digital marketing strategies in conveying brand information remains a neglected study and under-explored area, despite the prominent role that the sector plays in the well-being of families, communities and nations.

Though Zanamwe et al., (2012) examined the existence of digital marketing within the retail pharmaceutical sector; the viability of digital marketing strategies in conveying brand information to clients that this study seek to address, has not adequately featured in the academic fraternity. Unlike the majority of the studies on digital marketing strategies which have been restricted to quantitative methodologies which reduces everything to numerical scores, for example Zanamwe et al., (2012), this study adopted a qualitative approach which represent businesses' social reality as suggested by Wilson (1986). In view of that, this study provides a qualitative exploration of the viability of digital marketing strategies in conveying brand information to the clients in the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Limitations

The greatest challenge that this study faced had to do with methodological limitations, as the study was not able to engage the clients and other employees of pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to understand their views on the viability of digital marketing in in conveying brand information. Managerial stuff only, was purposively selected to provide the much-needed information in order to address the research objective. To resolve this limitation, further investigation was directed on the key informants, the manager since strategic issues remain issues of management.

Literature Review

This section provides a discussion of the literature concerning the stated research objectives, and a brief discussion of some of the key concepts that define the scope of this study. It also provides the working definitions of some key words and the theoretical framework that guided this study.

Theoretical framework

To understand the extent of the viability of digital marketing in conveying brand information to their clients in Harare, Zimbabwe's pharmaceutical manufacturing sector, the study utilised the Innovation Diffusion theory as it "assists in understanding the user adoption of different innovations in target populations," (Wani and Ali, 2015). As an academic tradition, basing ideas on existing theories provides a foundation upon which a study is anchored and provides 'a broader view of theoretical knowledge … to provide a complete account' (Murphy and Medin, 1985) (p.291). The Innovation Diffusion theory emerged in 1962 and was further developed by Rogers, (Rogers, 1995). The theory places focus on explaining why, how and to what extent new ideas diffuse and applied in different communities. The innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) firmly understands that new ideas that are developed from time to time in societies unavoidably become adopted and used by individuals and organisations voluntarily or involuntarily.

As argued by Rogers (1995), diffusion relates to a system in which new ideas spread from one geographical entity to another. In fact, the process involves the spread of ideas from one area to another, (Rogers, 1995). In view of that, the need to understand the viability of digital marketing strategies in conveying brand information to clients within the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry particularly gelled well with the Innovation Diffusion theory since the whole theory is based on explaining why, how and to what extent new ideas diffuse and become viable to concerned stakeholders. For this reason, the study was grounded on this theory. In view of that, this study was interested in understanding the extent to which digital marketing strategies have been able to convey brand information to the respective consumers of the pharmaceutical drug manufacturers.

Working Definitions
Digital Marketing Strategies are conceptualised as methods used in conducting business activities on the internet using web-based technologies to generate revenue, (Al-Fawaeer, 2014)
Brand Information - name, term, design, symbol or any feature that distinct sellers product from others. It is the idea or image of a specific product or service that consumers connect with by identifying its name, logo, slogan or design of the company owning it.
***Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Sector*:** In this context, the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector refers to those business organisations that are involved in the making of drugs. This follows that the sector that the author refers to as the manufacturing sector relates to all health-based drug manufacturing companies.
***Viability*:** In this context, the term viability is understood as the ability of the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector to convey or share information relating to their products brands to their clients.
***The Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Clients*:** In this context, the clients are the customers of the pharmaceutical manufacturing companies, which include wholesalers or retailers, medical doctors or practitioners and heads of health institutions like hospitals and clinics.

The Various Forms of Digital Marketing Practices
Scholars identified a variety of forms of Digital Marketing that are in use within the Indian Pharmaceutical Industry, (Agrawal, 2019). These included Search Engine Marketing, Search Engine Optimization and Social Media Marketing, [Agrawal, (2019); Ganesh, (2012)]. Smith (2011)], explored the various digital marketing strategies and ascertained the ones preferred by Millennials. Using a survey of 571 Millennials, it was found that side panel ads and online coupons were the preferred digital marketing strategies. Similarly, Bala and Verma (2018), in India provided a critical review of digital marketing using documents. The study identified various forms of digital marketing that included the Search Engine Optimization, Search Engine Marketing, Content Marketing, Influencer marketing, content automation and e-commerce marketing.
In Zimbabwe, Zanamwe et al., (2012) observed a number of Digital Marketing Strategies and these included e-mail, websites, Short Media Messages, Multimedia Messages (MMS) and websites. Similarly, Nyagadza (2022) also found that blogging, Short Media Messages and the Search Engine Marketing were digital marketing methods that were in use in Zimbabwe's business environment on a more general note. This current study differs from these previous studies because of its ability to narrow the focus onto the manufacturing sector so that an in-

depth understanding of digital marketing practices is advanced. In the next section, the study reviews literature on digital marketing viability in convaying brand information.

Digital Marketing Viability

Quite a number of studies pertaining to the viability of digital marketing within the pharmaceutical sector have featured in literature. Bharskar and Siddheshwar (2020) studied the use of digital marketing within the pharmaceutical Industry and found that digital marketing allows customers to make online transactions and this allows business organisations to advertise their products cost-effectively. On a similar note, another study by Nerkar and Roberts (2004) explored the success of new products in the pharmaceutical industry and established that the growth, emergence and development of a pharmaceutical industry is reliant on its ability to discover new products. To do this, the drug firms need to include a range of new pharmaceutical drugs using a wide range of new technologies including the use of digital marketing, (Nerkar and Roberts (2004).

Additionally, a study by Gayathiri and Ravindran (2020) needs special discussion. The study used a sample size of 9512 at 95% confidence level and 0.01 margin error, to analyse the importance of digital marketing in India's Tamilnadu among a collection of business entities. The study found that digital marketing is an important promotional venture for the survival, growth and development of business organisations. Another study that used a sample size of 62 pharmaceutical companies by Luvayo (2017) established the effect of multichannel marketing strategies on pharmaceutical companies' performance in Nairobi. It revealed that multichannel strategies adoption significantly influences company performance through income generation, reduced marketing cost; promote convenient and timely information delivery. The study used questionnaires to gather the data and was analyzed quantitatively using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Again, the inclusion of questions on sales by the researcher was credible as sales generation or volumes are an element of determinants of company performance.

Another study by Kalotra et al., (2014) that was based in India found that leading pharmaceutical companies that are able to harness new technologies in this digital world are finding drug business particularly lucrative, but the conservative ones are currently finding it difficult to survive and develop. Similarly, Nyamai (2014) carried out a research to determine the marketing strategies adopted by pharmaceutical companies in response to changing consumer behavior in Kenya. The study also sought to establish challenges in marketing strategies implementation. The study findings indicated that different pharmaceuticals companies adopted different marketing strategies in response to changing consumer behavior and the identified strategies were promotion, pricing, market segmentation, promotion, positioning, and branding and distribution strategies. Since the focus of Nyamai (2014) study was restricted to determining the marketing strategies being utilised by pharmaceutical companies, the current study proposes to focus on the viability of digital marketing strategies within the pharmaceutical Industry taking the Zimbabwe Case in Harare. Narrowing down this review to the Zimbabwean case, there is evidence that to date, no particular study that was aimed at exploring the viability of digital marketing in conveying brand information to the pharmaceutical manufacturing consumers has so far featured either in journal papers, or conferences. Of course, studies that were related to the impact of digital marketing within the pharmaceutical industry have been carried out. For example, Govo (2019) carried out a study that was aimed at establishing success factors within the pharmaceutical retail industry. Being focused on a multiple case study research design using

semi-structured interviews, it established a number of challenges that the retail pharmaceutical industry was facing. These challenges included stiff competition, underdeveloped health infrastructure, and a challenging economic environment including stiff regulatory requirements. Similarly, Khoza (2016) analysed the strategies used by retail pharmacy stores to attain profit in the Bulawayo City of Zimbabwe.

Zanamwe et al., (2012) study fruitfully challenged assumptions that the pharmaceutical Industry in emerging economies like Zimbabwe were far from engaging digital technologies. Employing an exploratory research design alongside the use of questionnaires that were distributed to 33 drug wholesale companies, it was found that more than half of the companies that participated in the research owned and operated their own websites. This work sets the pace for a new research agenda on marketing strategies within the pharmaceutical industry. Zanamwe et al., (2012) and others' study is, in fact, a rare intuition into working relationships between digital marketing strategies and the pharmaceutical world.

The Challenges that the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Sector is Facing
Previous studies have found that the pharmaceutical sector faces quite a number of challenges in the use of digital marketing practices. One Indian study by Mandal, Joshi and Sheela (2016), in examining the theories and strategies of digital marketing using an extensive review of literature found that one of the major challenges that the pharmaceutical industry faces when it comes to digital marketing strategies implementation are the failure of the companies to acquire the required computers to process big data as well as the prevalence of conservative minds that are quite common within business organisations. A study by Tripathy and Das (2020), while studying the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies observed that though digital marketing strategies have been implemented and harnessed throughout India's pharmaceutical industry, some sections of the society were not yet able to use these modern marketing channels due to an ageing population including issues of network challenges particularly in rural areas. Tripathy and Das (2020) further observed that the use of digital marketing in the pharmaceutical Industry in India is also facing low reception. Additionally, a Tanzanian study by Mkwizu (2019) identified the challenges of infrastructure suited for the adoption and implementation of digital marketing technologies. Thus, following a review of the above literature, it needs to be highlighted that a greater chunk of it has not so far addressed the viability of digital marketing within the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector, specifically the ability of digital marketing technologies in conveying brand information to the relevant consumers with a special focus on the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector. While Zanamwe et al., (2012) and others' study have studied the presence of digital marketing strategies within the pharmaceutical world, this current study proposes to give a qualitative evaluation of the viability of digital marketing strategies in conveying brand information to clients within the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector in Harare, Zimbabwe. This is the point of departure that this study seeks to fill. Apart from the fact that earlier studies have not focused on the viability of digital marketing within the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector, it is equally true that to date, a few, if any (except for Govo's study (2019), though the focus was on establishing critical success factors within the retail manufacturing industry), studies have harnessed the qualitative research methodology to explore or examine the viability of digital marketing in the medicinal drug industry. These reasons prove that a research gap that needs a refill is currently exist and this

study sought to fill that gap. The next section provides a discussion of the research objectives and questions of this study.

Research Questions
1. What forms of digital marketing strategies are adopted by the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry in Harare, Zimbabwe?
2. How viability are digital marketing strategies in conveying brand information of pharmaceutical manufacturing industry's product brands?
3. What challenges does the Zimbabwean pharmaceutical manufacturing industry currently face in the use of digital marketing strategies?

Research Objectives
1. To identify the various forms of digital marketing strategies currently adopted by the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry in Harare, Zimbabwe.
2. To assess the viability of digital marketing strategies in conveying brand information of pharmaceutical manufacturing industry's product brands.
3. To examine the challenges that the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry currently faces in the use of digital marketing strategies.

Research Methodology
Though evidence demonstrate quite a number of medicinal drug manufacturers in Zimbabwe, the researcher used Harare based pharmaceutical manufacturing companies as the research population. The study centred its focus on the traditional drug manufacturing companies and these included CAPS, Cospharm Pharmaceuticals, Graniteside, Gulf Drug, Pharmanova, SAPPS and Varichem. Other drug manufacturing companies that include Plus Five, Datlabs and ZimPharm are based in Bulawayo and likewise were outside the geographical scope of this research and therefore were excluded. Based on the argument that Harare houses the greater majority of the drug manufacturing companies (7 in total) than any other city, it became imperative to case-base the study in Harare.

In view of the above, Harare case was purposively and specifically chosen for the study since it provided excellent cases in terms of the geographical location of the cases in this study. In other words, it is in Harare, as has previously been highlighted, where a greater majority of medicinal drug manufacturing companies are located, (Medical Control Authority of Zimbabwe Annual Report, 2022). The Medicine Control Authority of Zimbabwe estimates that there are 10 pharmaceutical manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe; with seven of these headquartered in Harare while three of these are Bulawayo-based, (Medical Control Authority of Zimbabwe Annual Report, 2022). This follows that the study collected data on the viability of digital marketing in conveying brand information to their clients in Harare, Zimbabwe's manufacturing pharmaceutical sector. The study was therefore centred on the following pharmaceutical manufacturing business organisations: CAPS, Cospharm, Graniteside, Gulf Drug, Pharmanova, SAPPS and Varichem (figure 1 below).

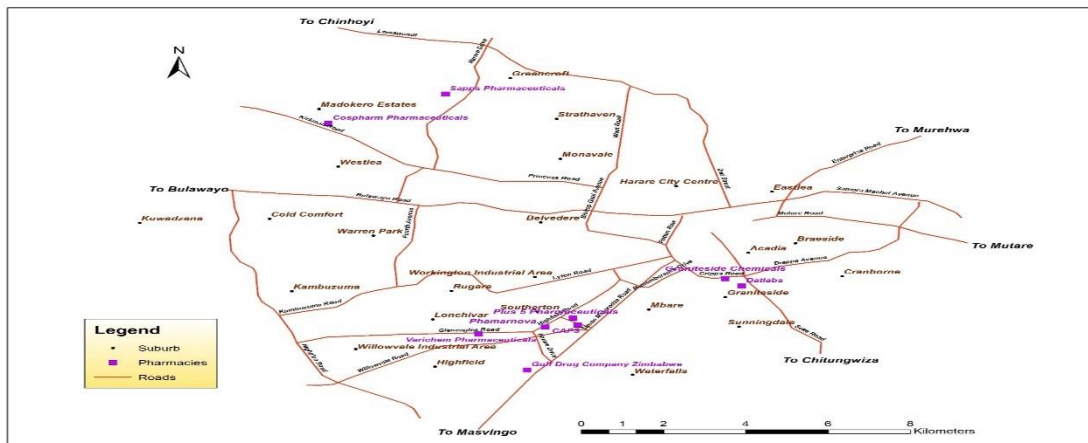**Map Showing the Location of Harare Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Companies**

Figure 1: The location of the study sites
Source: Surveyor General 2023, Harare, Zimbabwe

Additionally, preliminary research undertaking has similarly shown the researcher that Harare was the best place for this research as the capital city happens to be the hub of economic activity, incomparable to any other town or city in Zimbabwe. Moreover, noteworthy concern for the Harare case was similarly decisioned as a result of the researcher's background who happened to have been studying at the University of Zimbabwe and it is again in Harare where the researcher is currently stationed and working.

This vast knowledge of Harare thus effectively made Harare to provide a suitable case study that was second to none. Research ethics were applied for at the Binary University of Management and Entrepreneurship which was successfully granted. The researcher also applied for permission to carry out the research to the Harare provincial governor and it was similarly granted. Qualitative data was collected using key informant interviews guided by a Key Informant Interviews (KII) guide in which three managers from each of the seven dug manufacturing companies were chosen to participate in this study. The decision to choose three respondents from each organisation was based on tracking consistence of responses that were given in order to ensure credibility and reliability. In that regard, the field-work for this study was organised into three phases (Table 1 below).

Table 1
The Participants Who Took Part in this Study (2022-2023)

Respondent type	Number interviewed			Total
	First phase	**second phase**	**Third**	
Phase				
Managers of different departments				
	7	7	7	21
Total				
	7	**7**	**7**	**21**

Source: Field-work (2022- 2023).

In all the three phases of this field-work, the researcher asked the participants for informed consent to participate in this research. The participants were asked to show consent by signing a consent form. It is also interesting to mention that the names that have been used in this research are pseudonyms and this has been done to protect the names of the

respondents. Data was then analysed thematically using a computer based programme known as Nvivo.

The study carried out key informant interviews with those respondents who were at managerial posts owing to the fact that these respondents were believed to be the real custodians of information relating to the viability of digital marketing strategies in the conveying of brand information to the companies' respective customers. In that vein, the study excluded the clients of the pharmaceutical manufacturing companies because strategic issues are entirely issues of the management as highlighted under the study limitations section.

Data Analysis

This study adopted thematic data analysis using a computer-based software called NVivo, which allowed the researcher to recognise and make sense out of the data that had emerged from fieldwork as guided by Braun and Clarke (2021). Data analysis in qualitative researches take a variety of forms which may include discourse, narrative or thematic analyses (either manual analysis or using computer software like NVIVO). Thematic analysis involves a systematic method of recognizing, classifying and providing insights into the patterns, arrangements and meaning of a given set of data (Braun and Clarke 2021). The choice of this computer assisted qualitative data analysis software helped to distance the researcher from the data and served to facilitate a clear data analysis process (Allsop et al., 2022). Again, the software was chosen because of its ability to reduce a great number of manual tasks in research and therefore provided the researcher with ample time to discover the tendencies of the data, discover emerging themes and ultimately derive conclusions (Dallah, Abduh and Rosmaladewi, 2017).

The gathered qualitative data was transformed into digital text and then imported into the computer-based Nvivo software. Data was explored, codes were developed, and then further developed into themes, using key words. The emerging themes were examined carefully to establish meaningful patterns as directed by Allsop et al., (2022). Finally, the researcher reviewed the identified themes in light of previous research and existing theories.

The researcher came up with three main themes in line with the research objectives. The main themes dealt with the identification of forms of digital marketing within the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector, the viability of digital marketing strategies in promoting and enhancing organisational brand visibility, as well as the the challenges that the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry faces in using digital marketing strategies. In line with the research objectives, the main themes are discussed individually in the next chapter, which presents the study findings and conclusion.

Findings and Conclusion

This section presents the study findings objective by objective, discussion of results and conclusions drawn. This was done to simplify the argument without difficulties and to bring clarity.

Results

The results of this study are presented are presented objective by objective as summarised below.

Demographic Information of the research participants

Age Distribution
Table 2
Respondents' age distribution

Age range	<25	25-45	>46	Total
Number of respondents	5	13	3	21

Source: Author (2023)

Table 2 above demonstrates that the age category 25 to 45 had the largest number of research participants, followed by the age category of less than 25 and the last one is the one comprising those who were 46 and above. The fact that the majority of the respondents were between 25 and 45 years means that this is the age category comprising the majority of workers in the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry.

Respondents' Gender Distribution
Table 3
Respondents' Sex Distribution

	Male	**Female**	**Total**
Respondents	12	9	**21**
Total	**12**	**9**	**21**

Source: Author (2023)

There were twelve (12) male respondents and nine (9) female, validating that Zimbabwe as a country is moving towards gender equality in general (See Table 1.2 below).

Respondents' Education distribution
Table 4
Respondents' Education Distribution

Education Level	First degree	Master's degree	Ph.D	Total
Respondents	7	13	1	**21**

Source: Author (2023)

This shows that most of the managerial within the sector stuff are educated and have at least a first degree

Respondents' Work Department
Table 5
Respondents' Work Department

Department	Sales and Marketing	Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	Research and Development	Other	**Total**
Respondant	9	5	4	3	**21**

Source: Author (2023)

For reliability and credibility of research results, the respondents were purposively selected from various key related departments.

Forms of Digital Marketing Identified
The first objective of this study was grounded on understanding the forms of digital marketing strategies that are currently in use within the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector in Harare, Zibabwe. Research evidence demonstrate quite a number of forms of digital marketing strategies within the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector. These included WhatsApp, Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, email marketing, websites marketing as well as zoom meetings online between the pharmaceutical manufacturers and their respective customers who include the pharmaceutical wholesalers and retailers, medical practitioners, hospital and clinic heads or individual clients (patients). Conferring to one of the research respondents, the study learnt that:

The pharmaceutical manufacturing companies use a combination of digital marketing strategies and the most common are watsapp, email, websites and online meetings. Manufaturers sometimes send product liststo customers with available products and prices on whatsapp or emails, share information on company website or conduct online meetings especially for new products for awareness. These can be in the form of text, image, audio and audio-visuals or videos, (Angelica 20.04.23-Harare Key Informant Interview).

The Viability of Digital Marketing Strategies in Conveying Brand Information to Clients
This section presents the views of the research participants on the viability of digital marketing strategies in conveying brand information. From one of the research participants, the study was informed:

Digital Marketing allows pharmaceutical manufacturing organisations to disseminate brand information and enable content sharing to the clients irrespective of where these clients are located geographically. In fact, it is through digital marketing that clients can access information about certain medicinal products being offered by pharmaceutical manufacturing company. Brand information is particularly useful to clients and also allow companies to gain competitive advantage in the market (Chengetai 22.04.23. Harare-Key Informant Interview).

Additionally, it was also observed that digital marketing strategies enable pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to communicate and showcase their product brands in the global market. The highlighting or demonstration of products in the international markets help companies to attract new clients and open up new markets, as well as maintaining existing clients. On this note, one respondent commented that:

Digital marketing opens up new markets as well as helping pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to gain market share and expand their production capacities through the rapid gaining of new clients. Such advantages may also lead to reductions in costs; for example companies can promote the awareness of their brand at zero costs of information dissemination as well as reduction in costs related to printing (Genius 21.05.23. Harare-Key Informant Interview).

From another research participant, it was observed:
Digital marketing is the best way to get connected with our clients directly through communication. It enhances viability of our organisation by enabling us to understand the positions of our clients, meeting and interacting with them as well as providing analysis of organisational data behind a company's marketing campaign. This enables our organisation to attract more clients as well as keeping them happy and loyal to the company; hence digital marketing strategies are viable in terms of improving organisational image (Tanaka 24.05.23. Harare-Key Informant Interview).

From another angle, it was similarly pointed out that:
Digital marketing, particularly through the pay-per-click platform, enables our organisation to reach many people who search out for medicinal drugs. Additionally, social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp assist our organisation to get engaged in content sharing and carrying out our brand awareness campaigns (Monalisa 15.05.23. Harare-Key Informant).

Furthermore, it was similarly argued that digital marketing plays a significant role in promoting the pharmaceutical manufacturing brand awareness.
One way in which this was identified was through the ability of digital marketing to 'allow clients to read appraisals and consequently write annotations regarding individual experiences, especially through blogging. For most businesses, both wired and wireless reviews have definitely worked quite well as chunks of their strategies in marketing' In this way, digital marketing has thus been found to be particularly important in carrying product awareness campaign. (Mercy 23.05.23. Harare-Key Informant Interview).

From another angle, the study established that digital marketing is important in promoting brand awareness through creating a strong link between pharmaceutical manufacturing companies and their respective customers. From one of the research participants, the study understood that:
Digital marketing creates network connection and in this way helps pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to promote brand awareness among themselves as well as their respective customers. Such channels like social media marketing which are themselves real components of digital marketing enables the companies' clients to know the products that these medicinal organisations are manufacturing and so helps firms to operate competitively (Samson 24.03.23. Harare-Key Informant Interview).

On a similar note, another research participant opined that:
Digital marketing enables pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to communicate and carry out their product awareness campaigns cost-effectively and efficiently. It facilitates communication between customers and business organisations. We are now able to distribute intended messages to the specified audience without having to pay for the distributor or publisher typical for traditional forms of marketing, thereby cost-saving.   It also allows the companies to reach out to international markets as well as allowing demonstration or highlighting of product brand and sharing of adverts in various forms including pictures, videos, audios and messages (Jack 23.03.23-Harare Key Informant).

Additionally, it has been observed by other scholars that Digital Marketing allows companies to update their information related to their products and services anytime and this has the potential of retaining and expanding their customer base. This follows that business organisations are able to survive even in environments where there is stiff competition as it enables consumers to stay informed about specific products and services that certain companies are providing. This is being made possible by the fact that customers in the current are able to access and use the internet anytime anywhere or in the comfort of their homes or offices.

Challenges Being Faced by the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Sector
Evidence from field-work demonstrated quite a number of challenges that the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector is currently facing in their attempts to use digital marketing strategies in this technologically-driven age. The major challenges that were highlighted to affect the use of digital marketing inconveying brand information were poor internet and connectivity especially in remote areas, power challenges, high acquisition and maintenance costs and the presence of conservative minds. According to one of the research respondents, the study learnt that:

The pharmaceutical manufacturing sector in Harare, Zimbabwe face multiple challenges considering the state of the economy which in itself is struggling. These challenges include the high acquisition and maintenance costs of the devices needed to harness full-time digital marketing. These may include the acquisition of advanced machinery like computers to install big data and artificial intelligence technologies. Another challenge is the presence conservative minds within the managerial staff who sometimes does not prioritise or approve disbursements of funding towards acquisition of digital marketing technologies. (Taurai 22.04.23-Harare Key Informant Interview).

Additionally, another research participant also highlighted that:
The pharamaceutical manufacturing organisations are unable to reach remote rural areas though they have harnessed digital marketing practices. Some areas are still remote, yet the people who happen to live there need to know the drugs that we have manufactured including the knowledge of how these drugs work. Again, load shedding and power cuts also affect negatively the use of digital marketing. (Cephas 25.01.23-Harare Key Informant Interview).

Discussion
The study identified various forms of digital marketing strategies that are currently in use within the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector in Harare, Zimbabwe; and the include included WhatsApp, Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, email marketing, websites marketing and zoom meetings online. The findings in this study are consistent with early literature; for example, Agrawal (2019) identified Search Engine Marketing, Search Engine Optimization and Social Media Marketing as forms of digital marketing practices. Similarly, Bala and Verma (2018) identified Search Engine Optimization, Search Engine Marketing, Content Marketing, Influencer marketing, content automation and e-commerce marketing. Nyagadza (2022) also found that blogging; Short Media Messages and the Search Engine Marketing were digital marketing methods that were in use in Zimbabwe's business environment on a more general note.

The study findings also conformed the viability of digital marketing strategies in conveying brand information. It was highlighted that digital marketing enables *communication between companies and their existing and potential clients, brand information dissemination, content sharing, through various forms which include audio, text, images, videos or audio-visuals; and irrespective of geographical boundaries.* Digital marketing strategies enable pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to communicate and showcase their product brands in the global market attracting new clients, opening up new markets, and maintaining existing clients. These findings are in line with the observations that were made by Tripathy and Das (2020) when they examined the importance of digital marketing in passing information to clients within the pharmaceutical industry in India.

This is consistent with early literature; for example, Teixeira et al., (2017) who also observed that digital marketing increases sales opportunities leading to increased revenue from existing clients, the opening up of new markets and the gaining of new clients. They further maintain that these benefits may also include reductions in costs as a result of time reduced for clients' services, reduced costs of printing as well as dissemination of marketing communications, (Teixeira et al., 2017). Furthermore, it was similarly highlighted that digital marketing plays a significant role in promoting the pharmaceutical manufacturing brand awareness through its ability to 'allow clients to read appraisals and consequently write annotations regarding individual experiences. In that vein, digital marketing platforms also gives clients the opportunity to view the products being offered, and this in turn allows the clients to give comments on the effectiveness of certain products [Catalano, C.S., (2007), Park, Rodgers, and Stemmle, (2011), Sonawane, Mahajan, and Dhavan, (2023)]. Again, the findings in this study are consistent with earlier observations advanced by a Kenyan study by Makori (2014) who examined the effectiveness of Digital Marketing Strategies in enhancing business viability within Kenya's banking sector and found that digital marketing increases bank service delivery speed and enhances diversity and improves value creation through network formation.

From another angle, it has been observed that social media facilitates communication between customers and business organisations. A considerable number of companies, especially for Asia, are utilising e-commerce to their advantage by opening-up; a business undertaking which is significant in the promotion of internet technologies diffusion and competition, (Putri, 2021). Other scholars have similarly noted that in India, the decisions to buy certain products and pay for other services has principally been driven by the presence of e-commerce encouraging them to spend and in this way boosting business organisations' prospects of survival, operation and profitability, (Tripathy and Das, 2020).

Additionally, it has been observed by other scholars that Digital Marketing allows companies to update their information related to their products and services anytime and this has the potential of retaining and expanding their customer base. This follows that business organisations are able to survive even in environments where there is stiff competition, thus evidence of viabibity as suggested by Alyahya et al., (2020). Thus, the idea of retaining existing customers and creating other clients (especially new clients which the manufacturer has no contacts) is substantiated and enhanced by the adoption and use of digital marketing strategies that have currently assumed the lead in modern marketing, (Alyahya et al., 2020).

The also highlighted challenges affecting the use of digital marketing inconveying brand information. These were poor internet and connectivity especially in remote areas, power challenges, high acquisition and maintenance costs and the presence of conservative minds.

This is consistent with early literature. For example Mandal, Joshi and Sheela (2016) in examining the theories and strategies of digital marketing using an extensive review of literature and similarly found that one of the major challenges that the pharmaceutical industry faces when it comes to Digital Marketing Strategies Implementation are the failure of the companies to acquire the required computers to process big data as well as the prevalence of conservative minds that are quite common within business organisations. A study by Tripathy and Das (2020) also observed that though Digital Marketing Strategies have been implemented and harnessed throughout India's pharmaceutical industry, some sections of the society were not yet able to use these modern marketing channels due to an ageing population including issues of network challenges particularly in rural areas. In the next section, the study provides a conclusion and recommendations.

Conclusion
The study confirmed that digital marketing practices are viable in conveying brand information to clients, based on evidence from Zimbabwe's pharmaceutical manufacturing companies located in Harare. This study also established that various forms of digital marketing practices are currently in use within the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry and these include WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Instagram, twitter, email marketing, company websites, Facebook, and zoom meetings on internet or online with their respective customers who include the pharmaceutical wholesalers and retailers heads, medical practitioners, pharmacists, hospital and clinic heads and end-users. Additionally, the study demonstrated that digital marketing strategies are viable in conveying brand information as they enable time and cost efficient content sharing and brand information dissemination, globally. DMS allow pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to effectively communicate and showcase their products to their clients irrespective of geographical boundaries and in various forms which can be text messages, images, audio and audio visuals.

DMS creates a network connection which simplify brand awareness promotions, enables global markets reach cost-effectively and time-efficiently, allow businesses to open up in global markets and gain new clients, as well as updating brand information timeously; thereby retaining and expanding customer base. Pharmaceutical manufacturing companies can expand their production capacities through the rapid gaining of new clients globally. With DMS, which are cost efficient, business organizations, gain competitive advantage and improve their ability to stand stiff competition against the international giants. For example, companies can promote the awareness of their brand at zero costs of information dissemination as well as the costs related to printing.

Similarly, the pharmaceutical manufacturing companies in Harare, Zimbabwe are facing challenges in using digital marketing strategies in conveying brand information. These include high costs of acquiring and maintaining technological devices needed to harness full-time digital marketing; for example the acquisition of advanced equipment like computers to install big data and artificial intelligence technologies as well as the lack of convenient infrastructure in rural areas which is needed for internet connectivity and power supply, especially in remote areas. Again, the presence of conservative minds who are slow to accept and sometimes resist technology pause challenges in the use of digital marketing strategies in the conveyance of brand information.

Recommendations

In view of the study results and conclusions, the study recommends companies within the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry to leverage on DMS in conveying brand information in order to enhance brand visibility, thereby improving business performance. The study further recommends the government, through the Medical Control Authority of Zimbabwe (MCAZ) to monitor the information that is shared on various digital marketing platforms and the government itself to create an enabling environment for the use of digital marketing strategies by boosting internet connectivity countrywide.

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